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Chancellor credits EC for his success

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By Marty Stamper

Appeal Sports Editor

Van Chancellor has enjoyed tremendous success at every level of coaching basketball... high school, college, and professional.

Yet he credits his two years at East Central Junior College for making the many achievements he has attained possible.

"Without East Central Junior College, I would have never survived," Chancellor said while touring Disney World last weekend. "I went to East Central and, thank God, Denver Brackeen gave me a basketball scholarship or I couldn't have afforded to go.



Van Chancellor

"It was a great time for me there. As I think back, that's two of the most enjoyable years I've had in my life.

"That prepared me, not only to coach but prepared me for life. Without East Central, Van Chancellor wouldn't be where he is today, I can guarantee you that.

"I loved my days there. I made so many friends. Still to this day, I've got a lot of friends that I made there. I moved to Baton Rouge and a boy that I went to school with shows up and he's my insurance agent.

"I made a lot of friends there and they've lasted me a lifetime. It was just a wonderful experience there."

Chancellor joins Mack Fanning, Jack French, Mike Justice, and Norris Ashley as the Class of 2007 inductees into the Mississippi Association of Coaches Hall of Fame in Jackson Friday night.

"I started out at Noxapater High School and in my own heart, I've always

considered myself a high school coach," Chancellor said. "I've been very lucky.

"I've got a lot of great, warm feelings for the Coaches' Association and especially this group of people I'm going in with. I've got a little connection with them all, except for the softball coach (Mack Fanning).

"I recruited Norris Ashley's players when I was at Ole Miss. Mike Justice coached at my hometown in Louisville for a while, and I taught Jack French at one time at Noxapater.

"It's truly a great honor. I'm excited about it."

Earlier this year, Chancellor resigned from the WNBA's Houston Comets, a team he led to that league's first four championships from 1997-2000.

It didn't take him long to resurface as women's basketball coach at LSU.

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"At the end of 10 years, I just felt like I wanted to go a new direction," said Chancellor, a native of Nanih Waiya.

In that 10-year span, the Comets went 211-111 and made nine playoff appearances. He was named WNBA Coach of the Year three times.

He led the U.S. Olympic team to the gold medal in Athens in 2004 and has posted a 38-0 mark in International competition as head coach of the United States Olympic Team.

Chancellor coached Ole Miss for 19 seasons, guiding the Lady Rebels to a 439-154 record and 14 NCAA tournaments. He ranks 14th in career winning percentage among women's college coaches.

Under Chancellor, Ole Miss won at least 20 games 15 times. He was named SEC Coach of

the Year three times.

Chancellor was previously inducted into the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame and the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame.

Yet it all began with two years as a member of ECJC's basketball team. Known for his quick wit, Chancellor never says it was his athletic skills that got him high praise at the Decatur school. If anything, it was the opposite.

"I was just recently voted the greatest bench warmer in East Central Junior College history," Chancellor quipped. "I'm the 12th man on an 11-man team. But I learned."

He transferred to Mississippi State and during his senior year at MSU served as boys' basketball team at Noxapater High School. He went on to coach boys' and girls' basketball at Horn Lake High School and Harrison Central High School prior to becoming women's basketball coach at Ole Miss.

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